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NEW YORK, N.Y. Approved For Release 2004/12/15 : CIA-RDP75-00149R000700380049-4

THE NEW YORK

STANDARD

EVENING

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Senators to 'Get to Heart' of 'Cuba Threat'

By William Rollins

What promises to be the most exhaustive airing of the Cuban situation yet, an investigation by the subcommittee on preparedness of the Senate Armed Services Committee, was outlined Sunday.

Top officials will trace the progress and present status of the Soviet buildup in Cuba in closed-door hearings due to start within two weeks.

Subcommittee Chairman Sen. John Stennis (D-Miss.) said bluntly on Sunday:

"We really want to get to the heart of this matter—the threat, the menace, the probabilities for the future . . . I hope that we can get out to the American people the basic facts we develop."

The "basic facts" will come from Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Central Intelligence Director John McCone, the armed services' chiefs of staff—and "experts in their field."

The Cuban problem, since the Bay of Pigs invasion disaster, has been investigated and re-investigated by the Kennedy Administration and by Congressional committees and subcommittees.

In the background of the current flurry of demands for the "full story"

of the Cuban situation is an interview given by Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy to a national magazine in which the President's brother stated flatly that the President did not withhold air cover for the American-sponsored invasion.

The Attorney General's statement was denied by some invasion leaders recently freed in ransom negotiations with Fidel Castro—and the ensuing debate prompted a mounting wave of Congressional ire.

Sen. Stennis put the sentiment of many of his colleagues this way:

"Without anyone being accused of wrong-doing in keeping information away, I do not think the people of the United States have been told all the facts."

On the Republican side of the aisles of both houses of Congress, of course, the Administration's critics have been withholding the phrase, "without anyone being accused of wrong-doing."

Sen. Stennis, significantly, emphasized that he did not want to dig too much into the Bay of Pigs mess.

"I think that's spilled milk," he said on a television and radio program report from Congress by Sen. Kenneth B. Keating (R-N.Y.)

"There are no laurels for anyone in it, but I think we confuse the issue if we emphasize the old invasion of nearly two years ago," Sen. Stennis said, adding:

"Our problem is the present and the future."

Sen. Keating, an early and persistent critic of Administration policy on Cuba, asked Sen. Stennis:

"What do you think we ought to do about continued Soviet troop presence in Cuba?"

The reply from the powerful lawmaker who will direct the new Cuban probe:

"Well, of course, that's the big question."

"I want to get all the facts, but with this formidable strength, I think that we must have a hard, firm policy about it—convince them we are going to be hard about it."

"It could lead to the proposition that we'd have to make demands for this force as we did for the missiles and the bombers."

At another point, the Senator also said:

"I think the Cuban army is considerably stronger (than in July, when the Russian buildup began)

and I think with the added military capacity the Russians have put in there, the potential of it is tremendous. . . .

"We want to find out how much of that has grown since the October call-up, and of course, we are going to try to find out if those missiles are really gone, and the bombers."

"Our military men seem to think so but we will try to shed additional light on it."

The Communist buildup in Cuba, he continued, poses a threat in the form of "blackmail, subversion, intimidation, threats of coercion, and even an invasion" to the nations of Latin America.

Also on Sen. Stennis' subcommittee agenda is an inquiry into the possibility of a connection between the withdrawal of American missiles in Turkey—to be replaced by the Polaris submarine-launched missiles—and the Cuban crisis of October.